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ABSTRACT

Over the past 15 years, most colleges and universities have engaged in institution-wide long-range planning efforts to examine missions and future expectations. More recently, higher education institutions are adopting strategic planning approaches that move beyond setting goals and objectives to creating specific strategies to accomplish them. To gain information about both planning modes, a 1984 survey of 100 randomly selected public and private colleges in 50 states was undertaken. This article briefly describes the survey methodology and respondent profile and focuses on findings. The return rate was 76 percent, with equal numbers of public and private college responses. Results indicate that 96 percent of respondents used some form of long-range, strategic, or systematic planning process. However, only 43 percent had used strategic or long-range planning for five or more years. In most cases, college presidents or academic vice presidents led the formal planning process. Participation of faculty and other academic and nonacademic leaders was widespread. Further indepth studies are needed to assess the effectiveness of college planning efforts. Five tables are appended, including a list of the colleges and universities surveyed. (MLH)

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AN ANALYSIS OF FORMAL LONG-RANGE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING AS A GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

An Analysis of Formal Long-Range and Strategic Planning
As a Guide for Effective Leadership

Successful leaders in education must possess vision if their institutions are to overcome the problems and thrive on the challenges that lie ahead. Effective leaders must be prudent but creative planners and formal long-range planning is a responsibility of responsible and dynamic educational leaders.

Long-Range planning, and its recent variation strategic planning, requires developing a new way of thinking about planning on the part of the entire college or university community. It must be a smooth functioning process and a continuous effort to communicate and keep all people involved. The nature of such planning creates anxieties and tensions. The concerns on the part of everyone are numerous and well founded.

Educators should be aware of how the process works and affects them. Therefore, this study surveyed one hundred four-year colleges and universities to determine their experiences with planning and its participants. Seventy-six respondents shared experiences and the results are of considerable interest to those leaders who seek to stay informed on the state of the art. The analysis of data from this study clearly reveals that formal long-term planning on the campuses of four-year colleges and universities is alive and well.

Over the past fifteen years, long-range planning has become a necessary reality on most college and university campuses. In fact, many public institutions now are mandated into the process by their state governing authority. In most of these cases, it was the events of the 1970 decade that inspired the institutions of higher education and their governing bodies to examine carefully their missions and their expectations for three to five years down the road. As a method for coping with the need to change, the long-range plan has become an important activity of faculty and college officers and continues to play a major role in the administrative function.

While long-range planning represents a giant step in the state of the art for college and university management, it has not been as effective a tool as once was anticipated. George Keller, the noted authority on planning, reminds us in his book, Academic Strategy, that "Colleges need to strengthen their management and shape academic strategies for themselves."[1] Thus, we are rapidly moving the state of the art from long-range to strategic planning. In effect, institutions are moving from goals and objectives setting to specific strategic decision recommendations. As with many changes of significance, the process has led to considerable confusion, reflection, and duplication.

In A Guide for Planners, Donald Norris makes an excellent point, "Planning seldom begins under textbook conditions. It almost never proceeds with perfect precision."[2] Thus, the transition from long-range to strategic planning has been a rather slow process. Still, the interest and motivation to make the necessary refinements have brought about steady and persistent activity. In an attempt to develop

further information on this issue, this author conducted a limited survey of planning activities at selected four-year colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Methodology

The methodology for gathering quantitative data for this study involved the use of a questionnaire mailed to 100 randomly selected public and independent four-year colleges and universities in the fifty United States. One questionnaire in each state was addressed to a public institution and one to an independent institution. Therefore, the total sample of 100 institutions was derived from a population of approximately 2,000 four-year colleges and universities representing about 5% of the total universe. (Table I contains a complete listing of all institutions surveyed.)

The mailing took place in fall 1984, and the letters were addressed to the chief academic officers of each institution by name.

Respondent Profile

A very high response rate was enjoyed from this survey. Table II indicates that there were 76 respondents from the 100 surveys mailed, yielding an exceedingly high response rate of 76%. This may be attributable to the keen degree of interest that most academic officers have in the planning process, and particularly in the state of the art as it relates to their own institutions and to the topic of strategic planning.

Thirty-nine of the 76 responses (51%) were from public institutions, and 37 (49%) were from the independent sector. This gave a rather balanced response on the part of both sectors of four-year higher educational institutions. In terms of institutional size based on full-time

equivalents (FTE's), the responses were as indicated in Table II. Therefore, in terms of total respondents, there were a significant number of responses from institutions of various sizes with the small to medium (1,000 to 3,000 FTE's) and large sized (over 6,000 FTE's) institutions responding most frequently.

F I N D I N G S

Do many institutions engage in formal planning?

One of the major purposes of this survey was to ascertain if most institutions engage in some form of long-range/strategic planning. The questionnaire gave no definition of the terms--long term or strategic planning--but left it to the respondent to decide in which process the institution engaged and what that process entailed.

Table III indicates an overwhelming majority of respondent institutions have engaged in long-term or strategic planning. Seventy-nine percent believed they utilized one of these methods for planning on a regular basis. Twenty-three of the 79 (30%) identified their process as strategic planning, while 37 (49%) called their procedure long-term planning. Another 13 (17%) respondents replied that they engaged in "other types of systematic planning." Again, the questionnaire gave no definition of this term and none of the respondents were asked to define the term as part of the response, nor did they.

In any case, in total, 73 (96%) of the 76 respondents believed they were engaged in some type of formal institutional planning.

How long has formal planning been an active process?

We often fall prey to the notion that everyone does as we do and always has. This notion is often incorrect, and this research shows that many institutions of higher education are relative newcomers to a formal planning process, especially when we consider the planning thrust is about 15 years old. The survey indicates that of the 60 institutions stating they were involved in long-range or strategic planning, 20 (33 1/3%) said they had been engaged in the process for only 1 to 3 years. Furthermore, one out of three respondents indicated that they had been involved in the long-range or strategic planning process for only a relatively short time. The results also indicate that another 13 of the 60 respondents (22%) recall being in the process for 3 to 5 years, and only 26 (43%) recall being in the process for five or more years. (In one case the individual who responded for the institution did not know how long the formal planning had existed.)

Who leads the formal planning process?

This question was answered by 66 of the respondents, and Table IV shows the breakdown of those responses. It becomes quite apparent from the data that college presidents generally lead the process. Surprisingly, however, the duty often falls to a variety of officers when the president delegates this charge to someone else. In a sizable number of cases, planning is the principal charge of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and in a smaller number of cases, the Vice President for Development, the Vice President for Administration/Finance, or the Directors of Budgets or Administration. It is interesting to note how few institutions put the leadership responsibility in the hands of an individual specifically titled as a designated planner.

Who serves on the planning committee?

Table V indicates who most often serve on formal planning committees. (In all responses, faculty were cited as participants in the planning process.) After faculty, those most frequently cited were presidents and chief academic officers. Other academic administrators and non-academic administrators are less frequent participants.

The relatively small number of Board of Trustee members and alumni who participate on planning groups was somewhat of a surprise. This is probably due to the large amount of time commitment to such a task during the working day, which would prohibit many of them from participating because of their own time constraints.

Other Findings

The survey reveals that in most cases (49 respondents)--64%), formal planning is an ongoing process from year to year. Further, a large number (40 respondents--53%) indicated that they occasionally engaged outside consultants to help them with the planning.

Thirty of the 76 respondents (39%) indicated the planning committee had an autonomous budget, and 8 respondents (10%) said they received an external grant at one point or another to support the formal planning effort.

Fina[illegible]: 14 of the 39 (40%) public sector respondents replied that the planning formula is mandated by some state authority.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this survey demonstrate that the process of formal planning on the campuses of four-year colleges and universities is alive and well. This is so for institutions in both the public and the independent sector as well as for institutions of varying enrollment size. As to determining whether the planning is effective or what the true nature of the planning process really is was not within the scope of this study. Certainly, more efforts need to be undertaken to determine how effective the formal planning process is. Even more germaine is whether college personnel involved in planning really know and comprehend the subtle differences between the traditional form of long-range planning and the newer process of strategic planning.

The results of this study do reveal a great degree of participation on the part of faculty and academic and non-academic leaders on the planning committees. It also shows that in a large minority of respondent institutions, the President is responsible for leading the planning process. In a significant number of cases, where the President delegates the leadership, the senior academic officer is most often charged with the task. In only a small number of responding institutions does a person designated with the title of planner provide leadership for formal planning.

The survey does indicate that most institutions do formal planning on an annual periodic basis, and that most have conducted a formal planning process for no longer than five years. Further, a large minority of institutions report reliance on external consultants.

In terms of financing the planning effort, a large minority of the schools report having a special budget for the planning process, and a small number indicate that grant funding from external sources was received.

This is a small survey of limited scope, and it is recommended that larger and more sophisticated examinations related to formal institutional planning be undertaken. This would be especially important for determining the emerging status and effectiveness of strategic planning.

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[1] Keller, George. Academic Strategy, The Management Revolution in American Higher Education, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 1983, p. 121.

[2] Norris, Donald. A Guide for New Planners, The Society for College and University Planning, Ann Arbor, MI, 1984, p. 3.

TABLE I

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SURVEYED

Alabama State University	Alabama
Stillman College	Alabama
University of Alaska, Anchorage	Alaska
Alaska Pacific University	Alaska
Northern Arizona University	Arizona
Grand Canyon College	Arizona
Southern Arkansas University	Arkansas
Harding University	Arkansas
California State College	California
Dominican College of San Rafael	California
Adams State College	Colorado
Colorado College	Colorado
Central Connecticut State Univ.	Connecticut
Connecticut College	Connecticut
Delaware State College	Delaware
Godley Beacom College	Delaware
Florida State University	Florida
Jacksonville University	Florida
Albany State College	Georgia
Clark College	Georgia
University of Hawaii at Hilo	Hawaii
Hawaii Pacific College	Hawaii
Lewis-Clark State College	Idaho
Northwest Nazarene College	Idaho
Chicago State University	Illinois
Blackburn College	Illinois
Purdue University	Indiana
Wabash College	Indiana
Univ. of Northern Iowa	Iowa
Mount Mercy College	Iowa
Emporia State University	Kansas
Kansas Wesleyan	Kansas
Moorehead State University	Kentucky
Asbury College	Kentucky
Nicholls State University	Louisiana
Dillard University	Louisiana
University of Southern Maine	Maine
Bowdoin College	Maine
Frostburg State College	Maryland
Loyola College	Maryland
Bridgewater State College	Massachusetts
Anna Maria College	Massachusetts
Eastern Michigan University	Michigan
Hillsdale College	Michigan
Bemidji State University	Minnesota
Concordia College	Minnesota

TABLE I

(Continued)

Jackson State University	Mississippi
Phillips College	Mississippi
Missouri Stouthern State College	Missouri
The School of the Ozarks	Missouri
Northern Montana College	Montana
Rocky Mountain College	Montana
Kearney State College	Nebraska
Bellevue College	Nebraska
University of Nevada	Nevada
Sierra Nevada College	Nevada
Keene State College	New Hampshire
Daniel Webster College	New Hampshire
Jersey City State College	New Jersey
Monmouth College	New Jersey
University of New Mexico	New Mexico
St. John's College	New Mexico
Queens College	New York
Rensselaer Polytech Institute	New York
East Carolina University	North Carolina
Duke University	North Carolina
Valley City State College	North Dakota
Jamestown College	North Dakota
Bowling Green State University	Ohio
Cedarville College	Ohio
East Central Oklahoma St. Univ.	Oklahoma
Bethany Nazarene College	Oklahoma
Portland State University	Oregon
Lewis and Clark College	Oregon
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania
Bucknell University	Pennsylvania
Rhode Island College	Rhode Island
Providence College	Rhode Island
Winthrop College	South Carolina
Newberry College	South Carolina
Black Hills State College	South Dakota
Sioux Falls College	South Dakota
Memphis State University	Tennessee
Maryville College	Tennessee
Sam Houston State University	Texas
Rice University	Texas
Utah State University	Utah
Bringham Young University	Utah
University of Vermont and Agricultural College	Vermont
St. Michael's College	Vermont
Mary Washington College	Virginia
Virginia Wesleyan College	Virginia
Central Washington University	Washington
Pacific Lutheran University	Washington

TABLE I

(Continued)

Marshall University	West Virginia
Wheeling College	West Virginia
University of Wisconsin	Wisconsin
Beloit College	Wisconsin
University of Wyoming	Wyoming
Sheridan College	Wyoming

TABLE II

ENROLLMENT SIZE OF RESPONDENT INSTITUTIONS

	Number	Percentage
1,000 or less FTE's	18	24
1,001 to 3,000 FTE's	25	33
3,001 to 6,000 FTE's	12	16
Over 6,000 FTE's	21	27
	76	100

TABLE III

RESPONSE TO INVOLVEMENT IN A FORMAL PLANNING PROCESS

	Number	Percentage
Long Range Planning	37	49
Strategic Planning	23	30
Other types of systematic planning	13	17
None of the above	3	4
	76	100

TABLE IV

COLLEGE OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEADING THE PROCESS

	Number	Percentage
President or Chancellor	25	43
Vice President for Academic Affairs or Provost	12	20
Director of Planning	5	9
Assistant to the President	3	5
Vice President for Development	3	5
Vice President for Finance	3	5
Vice President for Student Affairs	1	2
Vice Chancellor	1	2
Director of Budget	1	2
Not available	4	7
	58	100

TABLE V

PLANNING COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS

	Number
Faculty	56
President or Chancellor	53
Vice President for Academic Affairs	53
Academic Administrators	47
Non-academic administrators	43
Students	39
Board Trustee Members	20
Alumni Representatives	16
Advisory Council Members	10

(Maximum number of responses - 56)